

**SOCIETY  
FOR  
THE  
STUDY  
OF**



# **MIDWESTERN LITERATURE**

Newsletter  
Volume Six  
Number Two  
Summer, 1976



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF  
MIDWESTERN LITERATURE

Volume VI

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The Sixth Annual Conference

The Sixth Annual Conference, observing the Sherwood Anderson Centenary, will be held at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, on September 9, 10, and 11, 1976, and in Clyde, Ohio, on September 12 and 13. It will be followed by an observance in Marion, Virginia, the following weekend, as well as observances in Camden, Ohio, Anderson's birthplace, Strongsville, Ohio, and Springfield, Ohio. The tentative SSML program is included at the end of the Newsletter.

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The Seventh Annual Conference will be held in the Spring of 1977, and the annual conferences will be held in the spring in the future. The topic for the program will be "The Study of Midwestern Literature: Past, Present, and Future." Those interested in participating should contact Dave Anderson. Participants should emphasize the exploration of new dimensions in the study of Midwestern literature as well as discussions of work that remains to be done.

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MidAmerica IV will go to press in October. There is still room for one or two significant essays.

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Fall Programs

The Society will sponsor programs at Midwest MLA in St. Louis in November and at MLA in New York in December. The former will consist of five contemporary Missouri poets, reading and commenting on their verse. They are John Knoepple, Sangamon State University; Robert C. Jones, Central Missouri State; Tom McAfee, University of Missouri; Ron McReynolds, Central Missouri; and Charles Guenther, St. Louis University. The program

in December will be "Two Hundred Years of Midwestern Literature: Part II, 1876-1976." There is still room for one or two participants.

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The Midwestern Popular Literature Program at the PCA meeting in Chicago included four papers by members of the Society:

"Images of the Midwest: Cornfields in Fiction and Film," Nancy Pogel;  
"Midwestern Jewish Writers," Ellen Serlin;  
"Chicago's Writing," Kenny J. Williams; and  
"The Art of the Midwestern Campaign Biography," David D. Anderson.

The Society plans a similar program next Spring, and those interested in participating are asked to write Dave Anderson.

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The Study of Midwestern Literature: The State of the Art

One of the most encouraging developments in scholarly publishing in recent years has been the rapid increase in the publication of studies that make substantial contributions to the study of Midwestern literature. In recent months I've looked at a dozen or more first-rate works of one kind or another, most of them by members of the Society: Martha Curry's edition of Sherwood Anderson's The Writer's Book; Doug Roger's Sherwood Anderson: A Selective, Annotated Bibliography; the spate of books resulting from the Willa Cather centenary, including Phil Gerber's Willa Cather: Five Essays on Willa Cather, edited by John J. Murphy; and David Stouck's Willa Cather's Imagination; as well as Milton Reigelman's the Midland, a significant study of John Frederick's journal, and Joseph Flora's brief Frederick Manfred.

All of this activity suggests that the Society and its members are making substantial,



significant explorations of the substance of which Midwestern literature is made: writers and their works. Further, it suggests that a good deal more is to come. The Sherwood Anderson Centenary, for example, will result in at least three books, special issues of two journals, and about forty or more papers, most of which will appear as essays. The state of the art, it appears, is healthy, in spite of attempts by those who would be critics--who shall be nameless here--to write its obituary. The study of Midwestern literature is healthier than it has ever been in the past, and, as we intend to demonstrate at St. Louis in November and at other times and places in the future, the creative production of identifiable Midwestern literature is equally healthy.

Nevertheless, we must be careful not to emulate the nameless surgeon whose operation was successful but whose patient was somewhat unfortunate. In spite of the healthy state of the art, we find ourselves continuing to ignore some of the most significant questions and the most difficult problems in the study of this or any literature: the problems of origins and identification and the questions of intra and inter relationships.

Particularly missing in studies under way or contemplated are those that deal with attempts at the construction of significant syntheses that go beyond the obvious elements of place or time. In the recently-concluded Willa Cather centennial observance, for example, as in that dedicated to Theodore Dreiser, much more critical perception was expended in establishing universality, and, in particular, acceptability in Europe and the East rather than in exploring the origins, roots, and relationships that had made them what they were. We hope that the Sherwood Anderson centenary this fall will not, in effect, deny those vital origins, and yet one never quite knows until the papers are given.

I am not suggesting, of course, that one should only approach these writers in terms of their Midwestern dimensions--the sort of thing, for example, that a number of Southern critics and literary historians are sometimes all too often fond of doing, but I am deploring the fact that we Midwesterners all too often ignore the dimension entirely, and in that

respect, we can and should emulate our Southern colleagues.

Particularly lacking are the kinds of syntheses so successfully completed by C. Hugh Holman most recently in his collected essays, The Roots of Southern Fiction. Throughout the essays Professor Holman identifies those peculiar elements that identify certain American writing as Southern American writing, not all of them peculiar only to Southern writing, but uniquely Southern in their peculiar combinations. Among them are experiences, traditions, origins, culture, self-images, myths, and tragedies, all of them spoken of eloquently by Midwestern critics and historians, but too frequently neglected, ignored, or dismissed, and certainly not traced in impact and inter-relationships.

Perhaps what I am suggesting is that although we have Midwestern writing we cannot have a Midwestern literature until we have a Midwestern criticism, as the Southerners have had, first unconsciously and then consciously, for so long. No more eloquent comment on the nature of Southern writing, its past, and its reality in the present has been made than the summation with which Professor Holman concludes his introductory essay:

...In a sense the southern writer has been a scapegoat for his fellow Americans, for in taking his guilt upon himself and dramatizing it he has borne the sins of us all....

Out of the cauldron of the South's experience the Southern writer has fashioned tragic grandeur and given it as a gift to his fellow Americans. It is possible that no other southern accomplishment will equal it in enduring importance. As urbanization and industrialization conspire to write an "Epitaph for Dixie," its greatest contribution to mankind may well be the lesson of its history and the drama of its suffering.

Perhaps somewhere in Winesburg, Ohio, in An American Tragedy, in the Great Gatsby, in A Farewell to Arms, in the tremendous vitality of a literature truly American but



equally truly Midwestern, such an insight lies waiting to be perceived and constructed. Let us hope, however, that it will be said soon, and in words as eloquent as those of our distinguished colleague.

David D. Anderson

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Newdick's Season of Frost  
An Interrupted Biography of Robert Frost

Edited by William A. Sutton

Lesley Frost was excited when she read the manuscript for this unfinished biography and called it "closer to the spirit of my father" than anything else she had read. In the foreword to this revealing collection of materials on Frost, she writes:

As I have often said, life is a series of circles within circles. It might be called Fate. Whatever it is, it often leads to an extraordinary sense of fulfillment: The feeling one has when dropping a crucial piece into a particularly difficult jigsaw puzzle--triumphant. This was what I felt when I learned that a manuscript, half-finished, half-completed, had been recovered from its oblivion of forty years.

It was in 1934, as a young professor at Ohio State University, that Dr. Robert Newdick had fallen in love with the poetry of Robert Frost. The correspondence that developed between the two men is particularly illuminating.

It was following the sudden death of Dr. Newdick in July of 1939 that everything in connection with the proposed biography somehow became "lost" in the archives of his widow. Apparently, no one was aware of how much valuable material in letters and articles (printed and unprinted) were available.

Dr. Sutton is, indeed, fortunate in having added one more revealing insight into my father's complex life by way of the poetry itself, particularly since it covers a

period not so well known--that is, the years between 1934 and 1940.

Previously unavailable information about the life, view of life, fictional process, and attitude toward biography of Robert Frost is supplied in this new volume, some of which is in variance with published items. For five years, until Newdick's sudden death in 1939, Frost provided materials and information that present a fresh look at his creative personality: through frequent letters, significant notebooks, an annotated first edition, manuscripts and notes, answers to questionnaires, and lengthy conversations. At midpoint in their relationship, Frost wrote Newdick: "You probably know me and my work better than anyone else outside my family." But he warned his young biographer: "You must be religiously careful not to make me anything but what I am," adding "...you must give yourself time to make up your mind about me. The older you are the better you will understand my foolishness."

Revelations on how Frost carried over the fictional process from his poetry into his view of life appear in all four parts of this book. Part I includes thirteen mini-chapters completed by Newdick as he had begun the process of assimilating his gleanings from interviews and correspondence with his subject and then checking facts and manuscripts against the memories of others or published data. Annotations to these chapters suggest items which are additional to, or different from, what has previously been in print.

Part II presents the relationship between Robert Frost and Robert Newdick, the fullest account yet recorded of Frost's relationship with any one individual, an account of added significance since that person was his accepted biographer. Parts III and IV include Newdick's Research Findings and Appendices, a compendium of material about Frost such as LETTERS from teachers, classmates, family doctors, publishers, and family friends of Frost as well as those exchanged between Newdick and Frost; DOCUMENTS: COMPOSITIONS by pupils of Frost that he had marked or commented on; NOTES by Newdick on his extensive and prolonged conversations with Frost; NOTEBOOKS such as the one Frost sent Newdick in 1935 to help with the biography, those of Carol and Irma Frost on family life



and movements, and a 100 page journal by Sidney Fox who walked and talked with RF when they taught at Plymouth Normal School; STUDIES of the authenticity of Frost manuscripts in the Huntington Library, and NEWS-PAPER ACCOUNTS of all Frost lectures and poetry readings together with copies of early Frost poetry and columns written for high school or Derry publications.

Newdick's meticulously complete files on Frost which the poet estimated at more than a million words also include: a complete bibliography of every published poem of RF until 1939; a checklist of 70 likenesses of the poet through portraits, camera studies, caricatures, woodcuts, and drawings; a list of every published criticism, review, or article on RF's work; a chronology of Frost's teaching positions; all of E. T. Thomas' letters to Frost; inscriptions in gift books in which RF quoted lines from his poems that have language and punctuation deviations from his published works; 27 pages of notes Frost had prepared for his classes; first drafts of the Frost poetry; and even Frost's hand-written outline for the Table of Contents for Recognition of Frost, 1938.

NEWDICK'S SEASON OF FROST gives evidence that Frost's candor with Newdick was at times greater than it would be in later years with other biographers. Even more, this interrupted biography of Robert Frost becomes an example of the process of biography, a running account of how a biographer attempted to bring such a personality into focus. Newdick reasoned: "The only right justification that one can have for looking narrowly into the life of an artist lies in the conviction that thereby one can throw more light on the artist's work and so promote greater understanding and appreciation of it. Conversely, however, the work throws light on the man."

WILLIAM A. SUTTON, Professor of English at Ball State University and first Vice President of the Society, conceived the plan for publishing Newdick's effort to capture a valid record of the life out of which Frost's poetry had come. As editor, Dr. Sutton arranged the chapters Newdick had completed before his sudden death and then made a selection and abbreviation of materials that

might be found in the two full file drawers that Newdick's widow had kept for 30 years. For further illumination, the Foreword by Lesley Frost and the tribute to Newdick by one of his students, playwright Jerome Lawrence, were added. Professor Sutton is currently preparing RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBERT FROST, based on materials gathered since 1969.

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The Indiana State University Bicentennial Committee invites papers to be presented at a conference to be held October 13-14, 1976 with the theme "Fictions and Facts: Dramatic License and the American Past." We welcome papers dealing with both scholarly and popular aspects of the issues surrounding the current interest in popular history, "docu-drama" in film and television, historical themes in fiction, and popular biography. The conference will include panels and presentations by prominent writers and directors from these fields as well as several sessions devoted to papers.

Please submit an abstract of your proposed paper before September 1, 1976. \$100. honoraria for expenses.

Submit abstracts or requests for further information to: Dr. Richard Clokey, Department of History, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana 47809.

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## Modern Western Poetry

The dominant stance in Modern Poetry of Western America (Clinton Larson and William Stafford, eds.; Brigham Young University Press) is that of coolly distant understatement, employing a taut control which a visitor from a less burdened century might call anti-poetic. Neither lyric nor exclamation, neither exultation nor despair, neither neo-metaphysical figures nor complex irony, neither Whitmanian rhetoric nor Shelleyan sentiment nor Keatsian joy: one begins comprehension by considering what this poetry avoids. Unless one cares to construct a mystique of geographical allusions, there is little here to stamp the poets' work as specifically western. Widely read, well travelled, these writers are not panegyrists of the prairie or sonneteers of the Sierras but participants in the prevailing mode of contemporary American poetic art, a mode that continues to justify itself by the high accomplishment it supports.

Whether one insists that style has a philosophical base, or views it as artifice, what prevails is prose-like clarity. But within this clarity there is reliance on more imaginative imagery than prose would ordinarily accept, more avoidance of connectives and filler words, more ruthless pruning of verbiage, and more sustained rhythm. The authors have perhaps taken to heart in ways Pound did not anticipate his injunction that poetry should be as well written as good prose.

Critics talk of surrealism in contemporary American poetry, but this collection again illustrates that the fact that whereas the French of the 1920s were satisfied to shoot off fireworks for the sake of the lovely pattern they make against our night sky, we heirs of Cotton Mather and Wordsworth have always wanted our rockets to carry a payload of moral or philosophical or experiential significance.

An example of the American approach to the surreal is Ralph Salisbury's "A Halo." This mixes Spanish Gypsies, Great Grandad, the shooting of a fox on a midwestern farm, and Hiroshima in a melange of vivid, not

always logically explicit imagery. But there is nevertheless a careful progression, one set of circumstances suggesting another so that the whole adds up to the statement (to mince no words) that the blood of Hiroshima stains the speaker's world. Such poetry though surreal in manner is not all so in substance; to put it another way, it is surreal in circumstance, but logical in its working out. Another poem by Salisbury, "Winter 1970, Fox River, Illinois" works by jaggedly counterpoising one set of images against another, and then to another, the whole, rather than any one passage, suggesting the way man is confined to surfaces. The youngest poet in the collection, Sandra McPherson (born 1943), in her patient yet glittering "Wearing White" writes a fine exemplar of the American manner (she even includes a Dali-like watch) to organized matter, her progression to the realization that she must stay "cool" if she is to see clearly.

But most of the poets, including such notables as William Stafford and Gary Snyder, stay within the clear, controlled form that is dominant in contemporary American verse. This disciplined, prose-like setting gives a context in which a mere suggestion of incoherence--a bit of fragmented syntax, a quick flash of imagery--indicates a crisis of comprehension or experience.

The anthology contains both the expected (Robinson Jeffers, Josephine Miles, Kenneth Rexroth, Theodore Roethke, Stafford, Snyder) and the unexpected (J. V. Cunningham a westerner?). As is usual with collections, some poets contributed work which was not their best (notably, Stafford and Snyder). The editors chose to print work only by writers of established reputation, a policy which excludes most of the thriving West Coast experimentalism. The editors also chose little that deals with urban life. Fortunately, they also excluded the merely political and they chose minority writers by accomplishment rather than as spokesmen for their races, leaving them a human dignity that few anthologists in our politicized age are willing to concede.

The editor's definition of the West is



loosely that territory contained within an oval running from Vancouver southeast through Nebraska and Denver to Tucson and San Diego, a grouping which leaves Texas, Oklahoma, and the states along the Mississippi to, presumably, the Midwest.

The anthology does what such a collection can do: it reminds the public of the accomplishment of the old hands, and it introduces several talented younger writers whose work most readers will not know. My only serious quarrel is that Stafford is himself so fine a poet that he should have given his own work better recognition.

Bernard Engel  
Michigan State University

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From a Midwest Notebook:

#### Families

My grandaunt Rachel could talk well on many subjects, but one she talked on superlatively, and if she failed to get onto that herself I would say "Tell me some more about our delightful family." Then she would recount how the bull bunted Uncle Joe Phillips into the water tank and how she and her brothers tormented their slow-witted Uncle Jim, and tell about Hans Werder, the German music student who became a man of renown, the hazards and embarrassments of taking a girl out in a buggy, and what might happen to a party dress. Her delicate phrasing of indelicacies was a literary marvel, and if she told me the same thing several times, the repetition solidified my picture of the life they had or an added detail clarified or sharpened it, and there was always a chance that she would recall an episode she hadn't thought to tell me before. During hours of talk about these good and pleasantly dull people, whose activities are much more interesting in recollection than they could have been in the happening, I saw Aunt Rachel as a sixteen-year-old tomboy, a belle of twenty-three, or a plump matron of thirty-five instead of my grandaunt Rachel in a wheel chair.

Rachel's knowledge, however, was nearly confined to firsthand experiences of her generation, and I had to go to printed sources for earlier names and dates. In 1806 Nathaniel and Anna Brundige Wyatt came from Virginia with Anna's parents and brothers into the valley of the Olentangy river. Of Nathaniel and Anna's four sons and six daughters all but one daughter lived to rear families of from four to ten offspring. Scarcely less prolific were their fifty grandchildren, and, with second marriages in both generations, the lines of descent are such as to elate a genealogist. From one son, Samuel, sprang the host of Wyatt progeny who used to be introduced to me at family reunions as my cousins. I had no idea who they really were, and when I looked with incredulity at some skinny girl with pigtailed whom I disliked at sight, or a freckled-faced lad who appeared ready to fight at a word, I would be told "She's your cousin, you know" or "Why, he's your cousin."

Samuel Wyatt married his cousin Lovinah, daughter of Nathaniel Brundige. Editha, the oldest of their nine offspring, Rachel's grandmother, is earliest to come alive in the family picture, and as that is filled in it becomes more and more dominated by the vigorous personality of this capable, strong-willed, and resourceful woman. Her life was not a good one, in the sense of giving her joys and comforts and satisfactions, but it was a full one, and as only those who experience great sorrow can apprehend the highest delights, I like to think it was other than a life of unalloyed pain. By her first marriage, in 1839, to Wright DeVore, she had three sons. Samuel died at sixteen, Cyrus was killed in "the battle of the Arkansas Post" in 1863, and only Sanford lived out a life expectancy. Wright DeVore died in 1846, and after five and a half years of widowhood Editha married Michael Phillips, whose Geburt und Taufschein states: "Diesen beyden Ehegatten, als Peter Phillips und seiner ehlichen Hausfrau Ekaterina eine geborne Enders ist ein Sohn zur Welt geboren, im Jahr A. D. 1806 den 3 Tag October."

Was it real emotional attraction that prompted Editha at thirty one to marry the forty-five-year-old bachelor, a cobbler



whose financial status could hardly have bettered her situation? To think so is surely charitable. Everywhere Michael appears he is ineffectual. He was so meticulous, so slow, so imbued with the spirit of the craftsman that he literally could not make a living at cobbling. Whether Editha's self-assertion was innate or developed out of necessity, obviously she was the manager of this pair, and the land they owned was in her name. They had a daughter, Mary Jane (Rachel and the boys came later), and after there was a son-in-law things were better. Michael was a gaffer about the house.

To look at their pictures in Mary Jane's album is a sentimental journey into America's past. How I should like to have known them all! Michael, at seventy-eight, with glittering eyes in a benign face. His sisters Rachel and Jane Ann in youth, wearing velvet jackets over basques and voluminous taffeta skirts. Cyrus DeVore, a sober young man with a shadow of chin whisker. "Grossmutter" Howald, a personification of the dignity and grace and charm of serene old age. Her twin sons, John Fredrick and John George, at twelve or thereabouts, as undistinguishable as newly minted dimes, with a marvelous solemnity of countenance they could not have worn unless preparing to perpetrate a joke. George and Mary Jane at the time of their marriage. Editha herself, with sharp and severe face--a disappointment, for in the genealogical drama her role is a heroine's.

How to get by their voluminous garments, beyond their gay or sad eyes, to see into their minds? What did they feel, and what did they think? Little evidence survives. None kept a journal, and the only written records of their doings are a few preserved letters. Those exchanged between George and Mary Jane before their marriage are so private and personal that reading them now seems a breach of trust. But time has made them social history. Under date of 21 July 1872 he addresses her "Dear Friend" and begs her to excuse him for failing to keep an engagement. His explanation is not very good: his brother Jacob persuaded

him to go "to quarterly meeting over at Fulton Creek" even though "i know i could enjoyed myself beter with you than i did where i was." If she still thinks him worthy of her company he "will call in two weeks from last night if it will be al rite with you." If it is not all right he "will com anaway." He cannot come sooner "because fred will want the buggy next Saturday." Her answer is unknown.

Ten months later he writes while recovering from the measles: ". . . it has ben so long scince I hav seen you I most have forgotten how you look but I expect you look as gay as ever gay as a peach and twice as sweet." He is "loosing al the good buggy rides." Then, after half a page--there is no punctuation or paragraphing--of trumpery and (mirabile dictu!) the weather: "I dont feel mutch like writing I am deaf and that makes me bout half mad I dont know wheather I will ever get over my deafness or not I did not know that the measles were half that hard but i took cold what made me worse." More self-pity, and he comes to the point: "I never wanted to see one person so bad in my life as i want to see you." Then, realizing this may be found immoderate, "I just thought i would write to pass away time."

In a letter to him (not an answer to the foregoing), she addresses him "Friend George" and proceeds to comply with his request "to tell you all of the news," which fills three pages. On the fourth: "I wish you was here tonight, but as you are not, and cannot be tonight, I hope that it will not be very long untill you can be here, for I am wanting to see you very bad, for it seems like a long time since I have seen you. I must close. I remain as ever, your friend." They did not write their love in plain words, and I wonder if they ever dared speak it; such were the reticence and conventions of their day that they could only tell how much they missed each other. But the spirits of the lovers breathe from these letters, though it is not easy to think of my grandmother, who in my recollection is a crotchety old woman, as the same being as this glowing girl.



There are letters to Michael from his brothers Samuel in Pennsylvania and Jacob at Bellville, Ohio, telling about crops, prices, wages, the children, and business opportunities. In the summer of 1827 Samuel proposes coming to Ohio if Michael will assure him he can obtain work as a miller. But "now there is such a noise about the banks that a person don't know whether to venture from home or not." In 1848 Jacob debates between entering the employ of a cabinet-maker and setting up his own shop. In February 1864 Sanford DeVore, in the Union Army, writes to his mother, who is in distress from want of firewood. (Where was Michael, or what was his condition?) He advises her to "hire the wood cut let it cost what it will." And "If you can only get along till I get home will try and make times easier somehow or other." He tells her "you must not get like grandmother and always look at the worst side of the picture." (Was that Lovinah's way?) He expects to be home within three and a half months. (May he have misdated the letter and actually been writing in 1865?) But on the first of June 1865 he is still in the army, in North Carolina, "doing the last work of closing the rebellion." Officers are absent and he has been commanding his company more than a month. He has "some notion standing examination for a colored regt in the regular army" but "I shall not go against your will."

Sanford came home and the following January was married. Editha lived twenty more years and Michael eighteen. Their difficulties must have been resolved somehow. Their lives--those of Mary Jane and George, Michael and Editha, Editha's sisters and brothers, and the generations behind them--were good lives in freedom from want and fear. None became rich, for one generation could not accumulate property enough to go far when divided among the next, and a few died poor. Yet the abject suffering of urban poverty was something they never conceived of. Money was scarce, and they knew hard times; but most of their edibles--grains, vegetables, fruits, and meats--grew on the land; George Howald and Mary Jane reared a family of seven, and at one time and another provided for several other relatives, on eighty-five acres. They were mostly farming folk, though the men might follow

various occupations in youth before they settled down to farming or combined farming with dealing in grains and livestock. Many of the women, including Rachel and Lovinah, taught school before marriage, as young women do now.

But for the country dwellers they were lives of intellectual poverty and what must have been for at least a few of the women bitter loneliness, mud-bound in winter to drafty, musty houses, impossible to heat adequately, where all the water used had to be pumped or drawn by hand and carried, lit through the long evenings by kerosene lamps or tallow candles, with the lantern on a kitchen shelf for carrying to the barn or the privy. They might sing and play at the organ (Michael was an amateur flutist), work needlepoint, or make scrap-albums out of clippings from The Youth's Companion, Arthur's Home Magazine, Peterson's, or Godey's Lady's Book--but not dance or play cards. Their letters testify that families living no more than a dozen miles apart saw each other only during the summers; and then, when the roads were dry, the fastest transportation, aside from the railroad, was horse and buggy. Visiting was planned months ahead. They could send letters, but not packages, by post, and had to go to the village post office to mail and collect them, where they would receive also The Cincinnati Weekly Times and the local weekly newspaper.

None were intellectuals, for had they been, a recollection or a tradition or some tangible evidence would have remained. I should like to think of Lovinah and Editha reading Scott and Cooper and Irving and Dickens and Thackeray, and going to hear Emerson and other famous lyceum speakers, but it is certain they did neither. They, like all the generations, were too occupied with the routine chores of a farm household to question the necessity of their never-ending commotion, to apprehend its shortcomings in needs of the intellect and the spirit. If they did not share the view that held novels in general to be morally injurious, it is probable that they read Susan Warner, Mrs. Southworth, Mary J. Homes, Maria Cummins, and Augusta Evans. I know Mary Jane, my



grandmother, read these sentimental and sensational writers, in youth and after. Many years a widow, she suffered partial paralysis in her old age, and endured a sad and lonely end of life with periodic shifts from one house to another of her daughters and sons-in law. But she liked reading, and passed a good deal of time that way. Her great solace was The Youth's Companion. Her enthusiasm for this periodical was life-long (she was a subscriber from girlhood), and during the three and a half years she lived after its demise she must have missed it sorely.

Lovinah, Aunt Rachel remembered, admired Charlotte Temple for its grave moral lesson. Michael had books, and a printed bookplate bearing his name and the place and date of purchase. But when a man dies, all his glory among men dies also, and it is hardly any time till his belongings are scattered or become mere lumber to his descendants (many relics in the attic of my grandmother's farmhouse were destroyed when that house burned in 1924), and the only books of Michael's I have ever seen are The Universal Pictorial Library and Howe's Historical Collections of Ohio. The bookplates in these bear different dates (both of the year 1848), so I cannot conclude that Michael acquired all his books on the same day though it is equally hard to believe he had a bookplate printed every time he bought a book. The family record of marriages, births, and deaths was kept in Editha's bible, but most of the record antedates the book, for she was near the end of her life when she came to possess it.

After the several months during which I was able to ascertain and order many facts about these forebears, they had come to be as real people whom I had talked to and heard speak, and their existence continued in my thought and my life and would remain there till my life's end. It signified nothing that those among them I knew best had been dead sixty years. It was my privilege to hold the knowledge of them that had been given me till I could transmit it to someone of a newer generation who would also revere them. This is the immortality of men and women who do not write books or music or paint pictures or become renowned statemen

or jurists or make inventions or discoveries. They do not, any more than skilled or learned folk, wholly die, but live in the minds of those who come after them, dying only if those fail to give them there a small place.

May one be so rash as to judge? They were not all good lives: some were violent and some were base. One of the fourth-generation Brundiges quarreled with his son and killed him, and in one and another of the lines are drunkenness and insanity. But whatever the defects of some of those lives, the best of them had nobility and dignity. The nineteenth century made them, and, quiet and calm and unspectacular, they have a niche, albeit minor and obscure, in its history.

William Thomas

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Society for the Study of Midwestern  
Literature Newsletter

Volume Six, Number 1

Published at Michigan State University  
with the support of the Department  
of American Thought & Language

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East Lansing, Michigan 48824

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Cover Artist: Dan Preston

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Study of Midwestern Literature



## Centering 2

Centering 2, a book of poems by five poets is edited by Midwestern poet F. Richard (Dick) Thomas and comes on the heels of the editor's year in Copenhagen, where he was a Fulbright Lecturer. According to Thomas, the new volume is "something to remember" from Denmark, but careful readers will also find themselves remembering Evansville, Indiana, and Racine, Wisconsin, Chicago, Illinois and East Lansing, Michigan. Despite the variety of places and subjects which inspire the poems, in its best moments Centering 2 is very much Midwest.

A good case in point and one of the most interesting poems in the volume is Thomas's "Friends," which originally appeared in the Beloit Poetry Journal. A tribute to the time spent with other poets and a wish to hold that time in memory, "Friends" comes out of a poetry workshop experience Thomas had in Copenhagen; however the poem's sense of community, its short understatements made of tight concrete images which are firmly established before the poem becomes metaphysical, and an innocence that permits intensity are all there to remind us of Sherwood Anderson's best lines and Dick Thomas's Midwestern roots.

John Barnie's and Calvin Forbes' poems also come out of the workshop in Denmark. Barnie is a professor at the University of Copenhagen with a background in medieval literature. This is his first publication, and while his work is not the strongest in the book, it moves in the direction that Thomas suggests in "Friends." With evocative images set on bare white landscapes reminiscent of Robert Bly's early poems, "Winter Death" creates all the anxious quietness of the late season of the year and the last days of life, as the persona awaits "a horse/Impatient of its plumes" that "Stamps/and paws the frozen ground."

Although black poet Calvin Forbes is originally from New Jersey and teaches at Tufts, his work is inspired, he says, by Chicago Blues and Jazz. The Midwestern city influence is felt especially in "David's First Song" about the poet's hope that he will live to

see his son grow into manhood, to take his first drink of brown bourbon. In "David's First Song" on one hand the form looks back to ancient ceremonial wine drinking poems which celebrated male friendship and manhood, and on the other hand the poem is rooted in the idiom of modern Chicago Blues.

"People I pay I live long  
Enough to see his living begin  
So glad he was born  
Into the world of cousin gin."

Similar echoes of Chicago Blues are found in "A Poor Man's Plea," "After Night," and "Song for A Spanish Sister" while "Third Grade Art" and "Song in the Dark" again reflect the mode of Dick Thomas's "Friends."

Jeanice Dagher is from East Lansing, Michigan, and her poems also remind us of the Midwestern imagination. Dagher's poetry usually deals with the near at hand. "Second of Three Poems On My Grandfather's Dying" remembers a hardy relative, who taught the poet about white pine trees on Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Dagher's "Grandpa" continues to reach for things despite his old age; he wears wash cloths on his head; and with an old man's best defiance he can be found "pissing in /his/ own back yard-- /a clear golden arc/ up and over the flowers."

What helps is hanging on to oneself,  
steering the ship with both hands,  
urinating alone, a short prayer,  
without a damn measuring cup  
just for the record  
of patient's output.

Among the several Dagher poems that might be called poems about women, the untitled one that begins "about Aloneness" which was first published in Happiness Holding Tank appears to be the tighest. The poem is about a special wonder or joy at the height of a romance which creates a familiar situation where the persona "hardly heard him say in a new soft/stroke way, the voice of someone who's been at it for years, I can hardly wait/to get your clothes off as I watched my sweater/rise up over my head and sail away."



Although his work is sometimes a bit too studied and the imagery is occasionally unnecessarily obscure and profuse, some of the most polished and promising poetry in Centering 2 can be found in Donald Kummings' contributions. Kummings, who teaches at the University of Wisconsin, Parkside, is the author of a book on Whitman soon to be published by G. K. Hall of Boston. He was the recipient of the Academy of American Poets' Prize at Indiana University. "The Yearly Round In Indiana, In A Fine Frenzy Rolling," first published in Stoney Lonesome, sets another stubborn grandfather against a grandmother who keeps crucifixes and flaming hearts about the walls in great numbers and who barely tolerates writers of short stories, neither the older grandfather nor the younger grandson. The imagery is made of bathroom chinz curtains, and although Dick Thomas, also of Indiana, never knew the grandmother and grandfather of Kummings' poem, he says he remembers the settings, especially one reference to a bingo marker. People still play bingo in Evansville.

In the mundane but meaningful "Fenster, The Window Washer," in the familiar images of "Approaching Joy," in the powerful raw imagery of "Crabs" and "New Providence Island, Bahamas," Kummings moves from concreteness to profundity with ease and originality--and always with evidence of a Midwestern debt.

Centering 2 is a remarkable collection which contains poetry that looks to Midwestern roots for subject matter, tone and technique, but it also leaves the Midwestern setting for other places on the map and in the mind. It is worth your hard-earned dollar (or in Danish your hard-earned Kroner). For copies of Centering 2, write to Professor F. Richard Thomas, Department of American Thought and Language, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

Nancy Pogel

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THE SHERWOOD ANDERSON CENTENARY

1876 - 1976

Tentative-Final Program - September 9, 10, 11, 1976

The Kellogg Center  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan

Clyde, Ohio - September 12, 13, 1976

Thursday, September 9

8:00 - 9:30	Coffee, registration
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome, introduction
9:30 - 10:30	Sherwood Anderson and His Age, Martha Curry, Moderator Nicholas Joost, "Sherwood Anderson and the Dial" Welford D. Taylor, "The Southerness of Sherwood Anderson"
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee, discussion
11:00 - 12:00	Sherwood Anderson and His Origins, Linda Wagner, Moderator Nancy Pogel, "Sherwood Anderson and Mark Twain" Philip Greasley, "Sherwood Anderson and Walt Whitman" Glen A. Love, "The Machine and the Cornfield: Sherwood Anderson's Struggle With Industrialism"
12:00 - 1:30	Lunch: William Sutton, speaker
1:30 - 2:30	Sherwood Anderson and His Contemporaries, Rex Burbank, Moderator John L. Di Gaetani, "Sherwood Anderson and Alfred Stieglitz" Dorys Grover, "Sherwood Anderson and Herman Melville: Mill Girls and Maids" James Schevill, "Sherwood Anderson and Bertold Brecht: American and German Grotesques"
2:30 - 3:00	Discussion
3:00 - 4:00	Sherwood Anderson and His Contemporaries, William Phillips, Moderator Carvel Collins, "Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner: Some Confusions Examined" Barbara B. Sims, "Joyce and the Genesis of <u>Winesburg, Ohio</u> " Dorothy McDonald, "Toshio Mori, <u>Yokohama, California</u> , and Sherwood Anderson"
4:00 - 5:00	Meeting, Sherwood Anderson Society, Welford D. Taylor, Chairman
7:00 - 8:00	Poetry readings, Frederick Eckman, Chairman, reading "To Sherwood Anderson, in Heaven" Mary Davis, reading from Sherwood Anderson's poetry New poems dedicated to Sherwood Anderson
8:00	Play: "The Triumph of the Egg"



Friday, September 10

- 9:30 - 10:30 Sherwood Anderson and His Art, Walter Rideout, Moderator  
David Stouck, "Winesburg, Ohio as a Dance of Death"  
James Mellard, "Sherwood Anderson and the Modernist Novel"  
Edward Stone, "Foal from Sherwood Anderson's Horse Stories"
- 10:30 - 11:00 Coffee, discussion
- 11:00 - 12:00 Sherwood Anderson and His Art, Ray Lewis, White, Moderator  
Douglas Rogers, "Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio"  
Barry Gross, "Winesburg as Ritual"  
Gerald Nemanic, "Sherwood Anderson's Talbot Whittingham"
- 12:00 - 1:30 Lunch: Philip Gerber, speaker
- 1:30 - 2:30 Sherwood Anderson and His Attitudes, John Ferres, Moderator  
Roger Bresnahan, "Sherwood Anderson and War"  
Gerald R. Griffin, "Sherwood Anderson and His Fictive  
Attitude Toward the Negro"  
Erik Lunde and Truman Morrison, "Religious Implications in  
Winesburg, Ohio"
- 2:30 - 3:00 Discussion
- 3:00 - 4:00 Sherwood Anderson's Attitudes, Bernard Duffy, Moderator  
Robert Kraft, "Sherwood Anderson, Bisexual"  
Nancy Bunge, "The Women in Sherwood Anderson's Fiction"  
Paul P. Somers, "Sherwood Anderson's Uncertain Narrators"
- 4:00 - 5:00 Annual Meeting, Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature  
Linda Wagner, President
- 6:00 - 7:00 Reception
- 7:00 Dinner in honor of Mrs. Sherwood Anderson and other members  
of Sherwood Anderson's family.  
Announcement of winner of the Sherwood Anderson Undergraduate  
Essay Contest
- 9:00 Film: "A Story Teller's Town," Gene H. Dent, writer-producer

Saturday, September 11

- 9:30 - 10:50 Sherwood Anderson: Observations, William Miller, Moderator  
Paul Ferlazzo, "Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg"  
Charles Modlin, "Sherwood Anderson's Library"  
Kichinosuke Ohashi, "Sherwood Anderson in Japan: The Early Period"  
Joyce Ladenson, "Sherwood Anderson's Women"
- 10:50 - 11:00 Discussion
- 11:00 - 12:00 Sherwood Anderson: Observations, Kichinosuke Ohashi, Moderator  
Joan Henley, "Transformations of Experience: The Autobiographical  
Writings of Sherwood Anderson"  
Clare Bruyere, "On Sherwood Anderson"  
Forrest Ingram, "Sherwood Anderson: Father of the American  
Short Story Cycle"



12:00 - 1:30                      Lunch:    Kenny Williams, speaker

1:30 - 2:30                      Panel: Sherwood Anderson as We Remember Him,  
                                        William Sutton, Moderator  
                                        Gilbert Wilson, Carrow De Vries, others

2:30 - 3:30                      Panel: The Future of Sherwood Anderson Criticism  
                                        William V. Miller, Ray L. White, Walter Rideout,  
                                        Welford D. Taylor, Martha Curry, Rex Burbank,  
                                        David D. Anderson, chairman

5:00 - 8:00                      Cocktails by Dave and Pat Anderson

Concurrent Exhibits

1. Photos
2. Works and manuscripts
3. Portraits
4. Paintings

The Clyde, Ohio Program

September 12, 13, 1976

Sunday, September 12, 1976 - Program primarily for Clyde people.

12:00 - 2:00                      Dinner put on by Moose Lodge which now occupies the old freight  
                                        depot. Informal, no program, walk-in.

2:00 - 2:30                      Dedication of Sherwood Anderson Park. Site of depot (demolished)

2:30 - 3:00                      Viewing of art exhibit. George White watercolors of "Winesburg"

3:00 - 3:30                      A STORY TELLER'S TOWN. Presentation of Gene Dent's TV show

3:30 - 4:30                      Social hour, refreshments, visiting

Monday, September 13, 1976

10:00 - 12:00                      CLYDE AND WINESBURG  
                                        Viewing of White watercolors  
                                        Slide show - orientation on tour of Winesburg spots

12:00 - 1:00                      Luncheon at Masonic Temple by Eastern Star ladies

1:00 - 3:00                      Tour of Winesburg spots (several groups as necessary)



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